

NOTE: These minutes do not constitute a verbatim transcription of the CPC meeting.

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
January 6, 2005**

APPROVED

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Arthur Simons in the Committee of the Whole Room, 13th Floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, at 4:50 PM.

Roll Call: Present at the meeting were Commissioners Cason, Glaser, Glenn, Simons, Smith, Wendler and Williams. Absent were Commissioners Christensen (excused) and Jeffrey (excused).

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes: ACTION: Commissioner Glenn moved to approve the minutes of Regular Meeting of December 2, 2004.
Commission Cason seconded the motion.
Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING--
Modify PD Plans for Blue Cross Blue Shield in area of Beaubien, E. Lafayette, I-375, and E. Congress for a new Parking deck and renovation of an outdoor plaza:

A public hearing was held on the request of Neumann, Smith & Associates, on behalf of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBS), to modify the approved plans in an existing PD (Planned Development District) generally bounded by Beaubien, E. Lafayette, I-375, and E. Congress to allow for a new parking deck and renovation of an outdoor plaza.

CPC staff member Gregory Moots reviewed the background information, surrounding zoning and land use, and CPC staff's initial concerns.

The proposal consists of the elimination of a 142 space surface parking lot at the northwest corner of E. Congress St. and I-375 in order to construct a 9-story, 1,825 space parking deck. Improvements to the existing plaza in the center of the site are to be made. An existing 1,259 space parking deck at the northeast corner of Beaubien and E. Congress is to be removed in the future.

The new parking deck is to be constructed of precast concrete with a brick face on approximately half of the south and all of the west sides. Stairwells at the northeast and southeast corners and the west side will be enclosed in bronze tinted glass in bronze anodized aluminum window walls. The roof will be covered with sedum, a green groundcover. An exercise track will be built on the roof. A pedestrian link will be created between the proposed parking deck and the existing office building on Lafayette. The link will run along the western edge of the larger office building, immediately to the north of the proposed deck. Ingress/egress to the deck would be via E. Congress and the I-375 service drive.

The Traffic Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works and the Michigan Department of Transportation have given preliminary approval to the design.

Improvements to the current landscaped plaza in the middle of the site include the addition of an amphitheatre and additional plantings. The plaza will be open to the public.

The proposal is in compliance with the Central Business District sector of the Master Plan which shows SC (Special Commercial) as the Future Land use of the site. A portion of the site is in the Central Business District Project No. 3 Urban Renewal Plan area. Map C-1 of that Plan shows a twenty-foot minimum building setback requirement from the I-375 service drive; the proposed site plan shows considerably less (six feet at the narrowest). A provision does exist in the Plan for reduced setbacks "if for every square foot of the building beyond the building control line there is one square foot of surface within the building control line which is landscaped or used for walkways, and which is accessible to the public and open to view from any one or more adjacent streets."

The CPC office received correspondence from a representative of the Cornice & Slate building citing support for the project.

A drawing of landscape plans was included in the CPC table packets.

Commissioner Williams requested clarification on vehicular access routes to the parking deck. He questioned the conclusion of the Traffic Engineering Division that the development would not have an impact on traffic patterns particularly at Congress. Mr. Moots noted that Traffic Engineering determined that ingress/egress to the site would not have a significant impact. The streets are able to handle additional capacity. Mr. Moots reviewed the pattern for traffic exiting the freeway to access the parking deck.

Khalil Mogassabi of the Planning and Development (P&DD) indicated that the project is in compliance with the Master Plan. However, he raised concerns regarding details of the site including the appearance of the south and east facades of the structure. He felt that brick should be on at least one level of the facade facing the I-375 Service Drive. Detail should be added to the concrete on the southern facade. He questioned the appropriateness of such a design for the downtown area.

John Neumann, architect for the project, reviewed details of the design indicating a desire for the structure to not look like a typical parking facility. He explained constraints such as the odd shape of the building, scale and slopes, and efforts to treat each side differently to complement and blend in with surrounding developments. He noted the balance of brick and horizontal elements.

Mr. Mogassabi inquired as to BCBS's parking needs. Ray Warner of BCBS stated that the company has always had a significant need for parking. BCBS is looking to address all parking needs for the company. A total of 1,825 parking spaces is proposed, but another 400 parking spaces are needed. BCBS will be including that number in the design of a second parking deck to be built in phase 2. The end goal is to provide parking for 2,200 on the campus site. BCBS will be finalizing the design of the second parking deck immediately upon completion of the first parking deck.

Mr. Mogassabi noted that the Downtown Citizens District Council is expected to review the plan and compliance with the Development Plan for the Central Business District Project No. 3 Development Plan at its meeting on January 20. The Development Plan does allow for reduced setbacks "if for every square foot of the building beyond the building control line there is one square foot of surface within the building control line which is landscaped or used for walkways, and which is accessible to the public and open to view from any one or more adjacent streets." P&DD recommended preliminarily of the encroachment provided that the 1400 square feet (exact calculation to be determined) landscaped area be provided along the service drive.

Commissioner Williams questioned why the replacement had to be along the service drive. Mr. Mogassabi cited the corner of Congress and the Service Drive for an open-place space. The space should be designed with urban elements, including walkways, seating, etc.

In response to Commissioner Glaser, Mr. Neumann noted that existing parking structure is 35 years old.

Commissioner Williams suggested that BCBS consider including commercial uses in the second phase parking deck. Mr. Warner responded affirmatively.

BCBS agreed to review adding brick to the southern and eastern facades of the parking structure.

Mr. Neumann reviewed the history of physically blending the properties of BCBS with surrounding buildings and efforts to provide cohesiveness with disparate structures.

Mr. Neumann reviewed the design of the courtyard, which is to be developed as an inviting public space. Civic events could be held in the space.

CPC staff indicated it would meet with P&DD to address that department's concerns.

Mr. Warner noted the proposed deck costs \$16,000 per space.

No one was present to speak in favor of or opposition to the proposal.

The matter was taken under advisement.

2005-06 –
2009-10
Capital
Agenda:

A presentation was made by Roger Short, Director, and Renee Short of the Budget Department on the proposed Capital Agenda for fiscal year 2005-06 through fiscal year 2009-10.

CPC staff member Michael Adebayo noted that in accordance with the City Charter, the City Council must approve the Five-Year Capital Agenda not later than March 1, 2005. In collaboration with the City Council's Research and Analysis Division, CPC staff will prepare a report and recommendation for the Commission's January 20, 2005 meeting. Commission action will be requested at that time so that Council's hearing and action can take place within the time frame required by the City Charter.

Mr. Short noted that each year the City sells \$40-\$50 million in General Obligation Bonds to fund the City's capital program. General Obligation Bonds are used exclusively for capital expenditures. General Fund dollars cannot be used to fund capital projects.

Mr. Short called attention to page 39 of the proposed Capital Agenda which details a \$34 million allocation to the Police Department in fiscal years 2005-06 and 2006-07 to pay for improvements to confinement cells. The allocation is necessary to fulfill requirements of Department of Justice consent decrees. Other necessary allocations include funding to upgrade various facilities to comply with the Americans with Disability Act.

In response to Commissioner Williams, Mr. Short responded that the capital program is funded through a debt levy of 7.74 mills. Capital program expenditures do not have an effect on the General Fund. The General Fund is funded through general taxes, such as income, property, casino, and utility users taxes.

Discussion ensued on the impact on the funding of city services as the population of the City decreases and the level of costs in providing services to residents versus non-residents.

Commissioner Glenn questioned whether the City verifies the appropriate amount of tax businesses should be paying, e.g., gas stations selling prepared foods. Mr. Short indicated the City was awarded a grant from the State of Michigan to assist in the collection of unpaid personal property taxes. The City will do more to make sure businesses are paying their fair share. In response to Commissioner Glenn, Mr. Short stated that the City would check to verify that businesses on 8 Mile Rd. between Livernois and Greenfield are properly licensed and paying the correct tax. Commissioner Glenn was to provide the addresses of the businesses.

Commissioner Wendler inquired as to the definition of "unprogrammed." Ms. Short responded that unprogrammed connotes uncertainty as to when a program may begin or the source of funding.

Ms. Bruhn expressed concern that given the consent decrees, few dollars would be available to fund other projects for the next few years. Of the \$50 million sold in bonds, how much would go to the \$34 million project? Mr. Short indicated that he would provide that information. He emphasized that the City must comply with the decrees. Other departments may have existing balances to carry their projects through the next two years.

At the request of Commissioner Glenn, CPC staff agreed to schedule an informational meeting with the Budget Department on the Capital Agenda prior to January 20.

McDougall
Hunt
Master
Plan
Amend-
ment:

Further consideration was given to the request of the Planning and Development Department (P&DD) to amend the Detroit Master Plan of Policies for the McDougall-Hunt Rehabilitation area to make the proposed land use and rezoning concept maps consistent with the 2nd Modified Development Plan for the McDougall-Hunt Rehabilitation Plan. The McDougall-Hunt area is bounded by Gratiot Avenue on the north, the alley first east of Mt. Elliott on the east, East Vernor Highway on the south, and St. Aubin Avenue on the west.

CPC staff member Kimberly James reviewed the request and addressed concerns raised at the Commission's December 2, 2004 public hearing on this matter and the results of a December 20, 2004 follow-up meeting with the community. Concerns raised centered around individual property use and concerns which were sparked by confusion over the maps, language, and terminology of the land use and zoning categories printed in the public hearing notice, and inquiries regarding new developments coming to specific areas.

The purpose of the proposed changes to the McDougall-Hunt area in the Master Plan is to enhance the marketability for potential new residential and commercial development in the area, while maintaining consistency with the McDougall-Hunt 2nd Modified Development Plan. The area contains a significant number of deteriorated vacant homes and lots and the overall area has experienced property value decline that has resulted in housing values that are significantly lower than adjacent neighborhoods.

CPC staff felt that the residents' and community representatives' concerns were adequately addressed at the follow-up meeting regarding the McDougall-Hunt area and that the overall proposed changes to the land use and zoning concept maps are appropriate and representative of the McDougall-Hunt Development Plan

CPC staff recommended approval of the Master Plan Amendment to make the Master Plan of Policies proposed land use and rezoning concept maps consistent with the 2nd Modified McDougall Hunt Rehabilitation Plan.

ACTION: Commissioner Cason moved to accept the CPC staff recommendation. Commissioner Glenn seconded the motion.

Discussion on the motion followed.

Commissioner Williams expressed concern regarding "blight by announcement." and the impact to the community when development activities do not quickly follow the changes to the Master Plan.

VOTE: Motion carried.

Director's Report: Ms. Bruhn presented the Director's Report.

A final presentation on the proposed Affordable Housing Strategy is scheduled for the CPC meeting of January 20, 2005. City Council is expected to have a discussion on affordable housing in late January and is expecting the Commission's report at that time.

CPC staff will be meeting with Commissioner Cason on Wednesday, January 12 at noon to go over the World Class City questionnaires received to date and follow up with persons who have not yet responded.

The proposed CPC budget for the 2005-06 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2005 totaled \$2,035,450, a reduction of .05% from the current year. In order to accomplish this, reductions were made in travel and training, the mailing service was eliminated, adjustments were made to bring some items more in line with actual expenditures (e.g., mileage), and the

current staff vacancy will not be filled. Increased benefit costs, such as pensions and hospitalization, prevented a further reduction in CPC's budget request.

The table packet included a copy of 2005-06 Mission Statement, Goals and Objectives, and Major Work Program as approved by the Commission at its December 2, 2004 meeting.

Commission Glenn cited email correspondence recently received from Medina Noor, Director of the Department of Administrative Hearings (DAH). He noted that his question had not been answered and requested staff to follow up with that department to determine the number of pending tickets at the 36th District Court. Commissioner Glenn also sought assurance that existing tickets would either be processed by the 36th District Court or forwarded to the DAH.

Commissioner Glenn suggested scheduling a tour of the DAH once it is operating.

Adj.:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.